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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR INL/C/CP, DRL/PHD, WHA/PPC, AND WHA/CEN

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SUBJECT: ACCUSATIONS OF WRONGDOING PLAGUE HONDURAN CHIEF OF POLICE

**¶1.** (U) On December 10, Aida Romero, Special Prosecutor for Human Rights, accused Chief of Police, Coralia Rivera Ramos, Commissioner Mirna Suazo, and the assistant to the Minister of Public Security, Juan Manuel Aguilar, with obstruction of justice and abuse of power. According to the prosecutor, these officials were responsible for the destruction of six AK-47s, which were being held as evidence in pending investigations of various alleged extrajudicial killings.

**¶2.** (U) According to press reports, the investigation showed that both Sauzo and Aguilar directly participated in the destruction of the weapons. Afterwards, it is presumed that the Chief of Police directed a "cover-up" and instructed those involved to lie to investigators.

**¶3.** (SBU) Post had heard that the Police Internal Affairs office had completed its recommendation for criminal investigation and prosecution and had numerous more serious charges to file, including: charges against Ramos for conspiracy in the murder of alleged kidnappers, obstruction of justice (for attempting to cover up the ordering of a murder as well as the destruction of evidence), misappropriation of funds, and abuse of power; Sauzo was to be formally charged for conspiracy in the murder of alleged kidnappers, obstruction of justice (for attempting to cover up the ordering of the destruction of evidence), and the misappropriation of funds. It is not clear why these more serious charges were not filed.

**¶4.** (U) According to Human Rights Commissioner Ramon Custodio, the results of the investigation have been known to the Public Ministry since last year. Custodio has stated publicly that action against these individuals should have been taken well before now to prevent Honduras from being known around the world as a country where impunity impedes the rule of law.

**¶5.** (SBU) COMMENT: If Custodio's accusations are accurate, this demonstrates yet again the reluctance within the Public Ministry to prosecute high-ranking officials. Also, as previously mentioned, it had been reported to Post that charges brought against these individuals would include conspiracy charges. It now appears that by dropping the more serious charges, the accused will receive little more than a slap on the wrist, if they are convicted. END COMMENT.

Palmer